

## RIVERS OF LIVING WATER.

BY THE EDITOR.

THERE is a remarkable passage in the New Testament, the strangeness of which seems still unexplained. We refer to John vii. 38: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Mr. Albert J. Edmunds calls attention to a parallel passage in the Buddhist canon where the same miracle is attributed to the Tathagato.<sup>1</sup> The mooted passage is found in the canonical work known as "The Way to Supernal Knowledge," (I, 53) and reads as follows in the translation of Edmunds: "What is the Tathagato's knowledge of the twin miracle? In this case, the Tathagato works a twin miracle unrivalled by disciples; from his upper body proceeds a flame of fire and from his lower body proceeds a torrent of water. Again, from his lower body proceeds a flame of fire, and from his upper body a torrent of water." This is not an isolated conception in Buddhism, for we find in the Book of Avadanas as quoted by Mr. Edmunds the following passage (*loc. cit.*, p. 260):

"From half of his body the water did rain,  
From half did the fire of sacrifice blaze."

The strange agreement of the same perplexing simile whose significance we can no longer understand seems to indicate that there must be some historical connection between the two, that is to say, that the Buddhist passage in some way found its way into the New Testament. The statement, however, must have meant something to the writer and may incorporate an old religious conception based upon prehistoric mysticism, of which the explanation has been lost. This view is supported by a number of old illustrations found on

<sup>1</sup> Buddhist Texts Quoted in the Fourth Gospel," *Open Court*, May, 1911. The opinion of Prof. R. Garbe of Tübingen on this passage will be found in his article "Contributions of Buddhism to Christianity," in *The Monist* for this month.

Greek vases which show certain deities the lower part of whose body consists of running water. One of these represents the Great Mother Goddess of the universe. We may call her Astarte, or a primitive Diana who appears in this form as the great nature goddess. Her hands are wings and the lower body consists of streams of running water, the living character of which is indicated by the presence of a fish. At either shoulder hovers a bird and on both sides on the ground we see two wild animals which as we know from other similar pictures are meant for lions. Swastikas and crosses cover the available empty spaces.

Schliemann, in his *Excavations*, publishes fragments of vases found at Tiryns which show a remarkable resemblance to the god-



THE MOTHER GODDESS ARTEMIS.

Boetian amphora, now in the Museum at Athens.

dess whose lower body consists of streams of living water. We quote his comments literally :

"Many fragments of Dipylon vases have been found in Tiryns, a sign that the citadel continued to be inhabited for a considerable length of time after the decline of the Mycenaean period.

"Figure 130 shows women carrying bunches of flowers and holding one another by the hand. Only two women have been preserved on the fragment, but the remnants of another figure on the right, where the breakage occurs, shows that several were represented, and we probably have the picture of a round dance or *choros*. Fig. 131 gives as a contrast to this feminine pastime the more earnest occupation of the men. A man is walking in front of a

horse which he is probably leading by the bridle. His waist is even more tightened in than that of the women, and his chest forms a complete triangle. A sword is sticking out from his girdle. Under the horse, simply to fill up the space, a fish is painted, and by the side of the man as well as above and below him all kinds of ornaments have been introduced for the same purpose, a meander, a swastika, or hooked cross, and several lozenges with a dot in the middle."

We would deny that any of the symbols painted on the vase are inserted merely "to fill up the space." All ornaments originally



FRAGMENT OF VASE FOUND IN TIRYNS.

Schliemann, Fig. 130.

possess a magic significance, although in the course of time it is easily forgotten. We have no doubt that the fish, the dotted lozenges, the meander, the swastika, have been put in with intention, and the chorus of women on the vase may be dancers who imitate in their dress the goddess of the flowing water. The wave lines too seem to indicate the waters above the firmament and the rain coming down from the clouds. The zigzag lines are a not uncommon representation of lightning.

It is not safe to make positive assertions, but we may be sure that the figures and symbols on these vases are not purely ornamental but had a definite meaning.

We cannot doubt that the idea of a divine body consisting partly of flames (or perhaps more correctly of light) and partly of water inhabited by creatures of earth, air and water, was not isolated, and the question arises whether this view does not come



FRAGMENT OF VASE SHOWING MAN AND HORSE.  
Schliemann, Fig. 131.

down to us from a primeval age and so would naturally be common to all mankind. This conception of divinity may have acquired a definite meaning in some mystic rite indicative of the attainment of the highest degree of perfection.